

Harold Brooks President

AFSCME, Local 3144

S. B. 350 -Juneteenth Day

Government Administrative & Elections Committee

Good day Co-Chairs Fox and Flexer and members of the Government Administrative & Election Committee. My name is Harold Brooks, and I am the president of AFSCME, Local 3144. I am here in support of bill 350, Juneteenth Day.

I am here to testify and request that the State of Connecticut not only recognize Juneteenth Day, but you as a committee vote to make Juneteenth Day a Holiday to be celebrated in our state. Texas has already moved and voted to make this a state holiday and the country has followed suit in making it a federal holiday to commemorate the end of slavery in the United States. By supporting and voting for this legislation you will not only help foster and stimulate conversations but acknowledge our past and help us a state move forward. This is an opportunity and the right step in moving us forward in race relations in this country. This is a good thing for the citizens of our state. As we stop and reflect on the past and the momentous progress that we as a country and people of African descent have made, it sheds hope that the future can only get brighter.

The effects of slavery are still affecting generations of African American citizens of this country. I met a woman from Virginia who happened to share my last name, we began to talk and inquire if possibly we may be related. Many families were torn apart during that time and prior and to celebrate the ending of the enslavement of people is worthy of celebration and no price tag can compare to it. If this bill passes and becomes a state holiday our state will be better for it.

Again, the significance of Juneteenth Day is to commemorate the end of slavery in the United States, specifically in Texas, where the slaves there weren't informed until the Union soldiers came into the State on June 19, 1865. An entire population had not discovered that they were freed by the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation until two years later. This day of celebration is about freedom, and it should be used to acknowledge the past and move forward towards a united nation in harmony. I urge you to support this legislation.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.